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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted by the teacher education program, University of Saskatchewan, to determine the effectiveness of practicum supervisory practices by cooperating teachers. Student teachers (N=126) were surveyed with respect to 31 present and ideal clinical supervision behaviors before and after a 4-month internship. Training and experience in supervision were also examined as related factors. The following questions were asked: (1) what are interns' perceptions of their cooperating teachers supervision? (2) what are interns' perceptions of ideal supervisory behavior? (3) what supervisory behaviors bring intern satisfaction? and (4) does intern satisfaction with supervision of interns vary as a function of training and experience in supervision? The satisfaction measure of least difference between present and ideal scores indicated that intern supervision satisfaction increased and moved closer to the ideal when interns and cooperating teachers experienced training and frequent practice in clinical supervision. The most used and most wanted supervisory behavior was when the observer "stayed at least 30 minutes." Audio or video recording and charting physical movement were the least used and least wanted supervisory behaviors. (Author/LL)

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Abstract

This article reports the ratings of 126 interns of 31 present and ideal clinical supervision behaviours before and after a four month internship to determine interns' perceptions of satisfaction with cooperating teachers' supervision. Training and experience in supervision were also examined as related factors. The satisfaction measure of least difference between present and ideal scores indicated intern supervision satisfaction increased and moved closer to the ideal when interns and cooperating teachers experienced training and frequent practice in clinical supervision. The most used and most wanted supervisory behavior was when the observer "stayed at least 30 minutes". Audio, video recording and charting physical movement were the least used and least wanted supervisory behaviors.

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Douglas J. Smith is a member of the faculty at the College of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Smith has particular interest in teacher supervision, models of instruction, and field experiences. He has taught from kindergarten to university in Alberta, the Canadian Arctic, and Australia. These experiences provide a personal resource in his current professional activities of instruction, teacher supervision, and research.

Intern Perspectives on the Quality of
Cooperating Teacher Supervision
Douglas James Smith

INTRODUCTION

This study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of supervisory practices by cooperating teachers in the practicum of the teacher education program at the University of Saskatchewan. In considering the practicum experience from the interns' point of view, the following questions were asked:

1. What are interns' perceptions of their cooperating teachers' supervision?
2. What are interns' perceptions of ideal supervisory behavior?
3. What supervisory behaviors bring intern satisfaction?
4. Does intern satisfaction with supervision of interns vary as a function of training and experience in supervision?

Answers to these questions may be helpful in understanding forces that influence intern support or opposition to supervision. Practices may be revealed that should be maintained, incorporated, or deleted from current supervisory practice and also, the data can provide a basis for developing public statements that may guide policy, training, and implementation of more effective teacher preservice practice.

Student teaching is generally recognized as the most important preservice experience both by researchers (Brimfield and Leonard, 1983) and by teachers in their first few years of teaching (Clark, 1984). There is, however, little agreement on what constitutes the "best" student teaching. Some research has suggested that two factors are crucial: (a) the role of the cooperating teacher and (b) the application of teacher effectiveness findings. The College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, supported by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation has created a program that

emphasizes these two aspects. In this four month program cooperating teachers and interns are trained and then practise clinical supervision and effective teaching.

Hays (1982) at a conference on "Student Teaching: Problems and Promising Practices", suggested when determining success in student teaching experience, the major research questions should examine the factors in student teaching that make it professionally satisfying or unsatisfying from the student teacher's point of view" (p.77). The questions that would examine the relationship of cooperating teacher, teacher effectiveness, the nature of the supervision experience, and intern satisfaction were the basis of this research.

THE BACKGROUND LITERATURE

The conceptual base of satisfaction, supervision, and supervisory behaviors were identified and applied to student teaching, and to the influence of cooperating teachers' on preservice teachers. Herzberg's (1968) study on job satisfaction which was applied to teachers by Sergiovanni (1967) and recently reviewed by Perko (1985) formed part of the conceptual framework for this study. Job satisfaction was defined as the extent to which institutional role expectations are congruent with personal need and disposition. Miskel, Glasnapp, & Hatley (1975, p. 40) provided the two-column structure for satisfaction measure with their conceptualization of job satisfaction as the difference between actual (present) experience and individual expectation (ideal).

Clinical supervision defined by Acheson (1982) as supervision which includes cooperative planning, observation, and feedback for the purpose of improving instruction provided the interaction framework for this study. Krajewski (1982), Reavis, (1977), Acheson & Gall (1987) pointed to clinical supervision as the most positive form of teacher supervision. This was reinforced by Spellman & Jacko (1988) who indicated that clinically supervised student teachers had more positive,

effective internships than student teachers who were not clinically supervised. Therefore thirty-one clinical supervision behaviors created by Shinn (1977), modified by Acheson (1982), and validated by Khalil (1983), Duncan (1984), Townsend (1984), and Smith (1986) were selected as items for construction of the "supervisory behaviors" section of the survey. The items covered the supervision cycle of pre-conference, observation and post-conference.

Teacher effectiveness findings have been used by Hunter (1980) and Rosenshine and Stevens (1986) to formulate technical approaches to teaching. These techniques, which have been the core of the Saskatchewan internship model, advocate specific lesson formats and other procedures that provide a generic formula for teaching all subjects.

Despite Blumberg's (1980) conclusion that "the work of supervisors... has little effect in raising the quality of instruction as a whole" (p.234), Koehler (1986) and earlier researchers (Yee, 1969; Friebus, 1977; Seperson and Joyce, 1973) have concluded that the supervision of the cooperating teacher is the key human element in successful student teaching.

METHODS

The researcher used a survey to gain general dimensions and specific details about the level of intern satisfaction with supervision. It consisted of the "supervisory behaviors" questionnaire created by Shinn (1977) which measure teacher perceptions of present and ideal supervisor behavior before observation, during observation, and following observation of the class. It employed two Likert-type, five point scales ranging from "never" to "often", one on the left margin of each question for "present" responses and the other on the right margin for "ideal" response. To establish baseline data, the survey was administered to interns by college supervisors at the first intern/cooperating teacher training seminar. The

survey questions prompted interns to recall previous student teaching supervision and to identify ideal supervision. At the conclusion of the internship, the college supervisors re-administered the survey during the final school site observation to determine changes after intern training and four month's experience in supervision for effective teaching.

SAMPLE

In the Fall 1988 semester, six of ten intern groups were selected. One hundred thirty-six (45 males, 91 females) elementary and secondary interns responded initially and 126 (44 males, 82 females) completed the post-internship surveys. On the basis of subject or grade preference one third of the interns were placed in urban settings. The remaining interns were placed in rural schools to the north and west of Saskatoon.

Interns observed, assisted and gradually increased their teaching load from one lesson per day to two weeks of full time teaching in the final weeks of the internship. Intern growth was guided by monthly seminars dealing with planning, classroom management, questioning, reacting, presenting and supervision techniques. One or two of these effective teaching topics became the intern's monthly teaching focus. College supervisors instructed, modelled and provided practice for the pairs at the seminars and completed a cycle of supervision with each intern once a month. Each day, cooperating teachers supervised and took data on one formal lesson of their intern. Accurate records of all planning and observations were kept by each intern. In all interactions interns were encouraged to display leadership, to select observation targets and to reflect on their own teaching.

RESULTS

Intern mean ratings of cooperating teacher supervision are displayed in

Figures 1 and 2 and described below. For all measures, interns rated the observation phase of the supervisory cycle lowest and had greatest satisfaction with post observation conferences. The most consistently low-ranked supervisory behaviors for all measures (pre internship present and ideal; post internship present and ideal) were "audio and video recordings" and "charting physical movement". They were also least satisfying for pre and post internship when satisfaction was measured as the least difference between present and ideal means. These behaviors were rated as rarely used and ostensibly seldom wanted by numerous teacher samples (Acheson, 1982; Khalil, 1983; Townsend, 1984; Smith, 1986). Interns and supervisors may need further training in these techniques to make them common practice and to reduce the sense of threat associated with these techniques. Other supervisory behavior ratings are listed below under the subsections of the two surveys.

Pre-internship

Present. The most frequently used pre-internship behavior was "meets with me after observation". This point was reinforced in a previous study by interviewed teachers who said, "best observation experiences had immediate post conferences" (Smith, 1988). Some teachers become nervous and anticipate negative results when post conferences are delayed or deleted. "Stays with me at least 30 minutes" was the next highest rating. This satisfies interns as most observations are of sufficient length to ensure fair assessment of the class.

Ideal. The highest rated ideal supervisory behavior was also "meets with me after observation" followed by "meets with me before observation" and "gives advice to improve teaching". Advice seeking is characteristic of most student teachers according to Glickman's (1985) description of teachers who respond to "directive" supervision.

Satisfaction. The supervisory behavior giving greatest satisfaction was also "stays at least 30 minutes". This was followed by "gives opinion regarding

Mean Ratings of Supervisory Behaviours

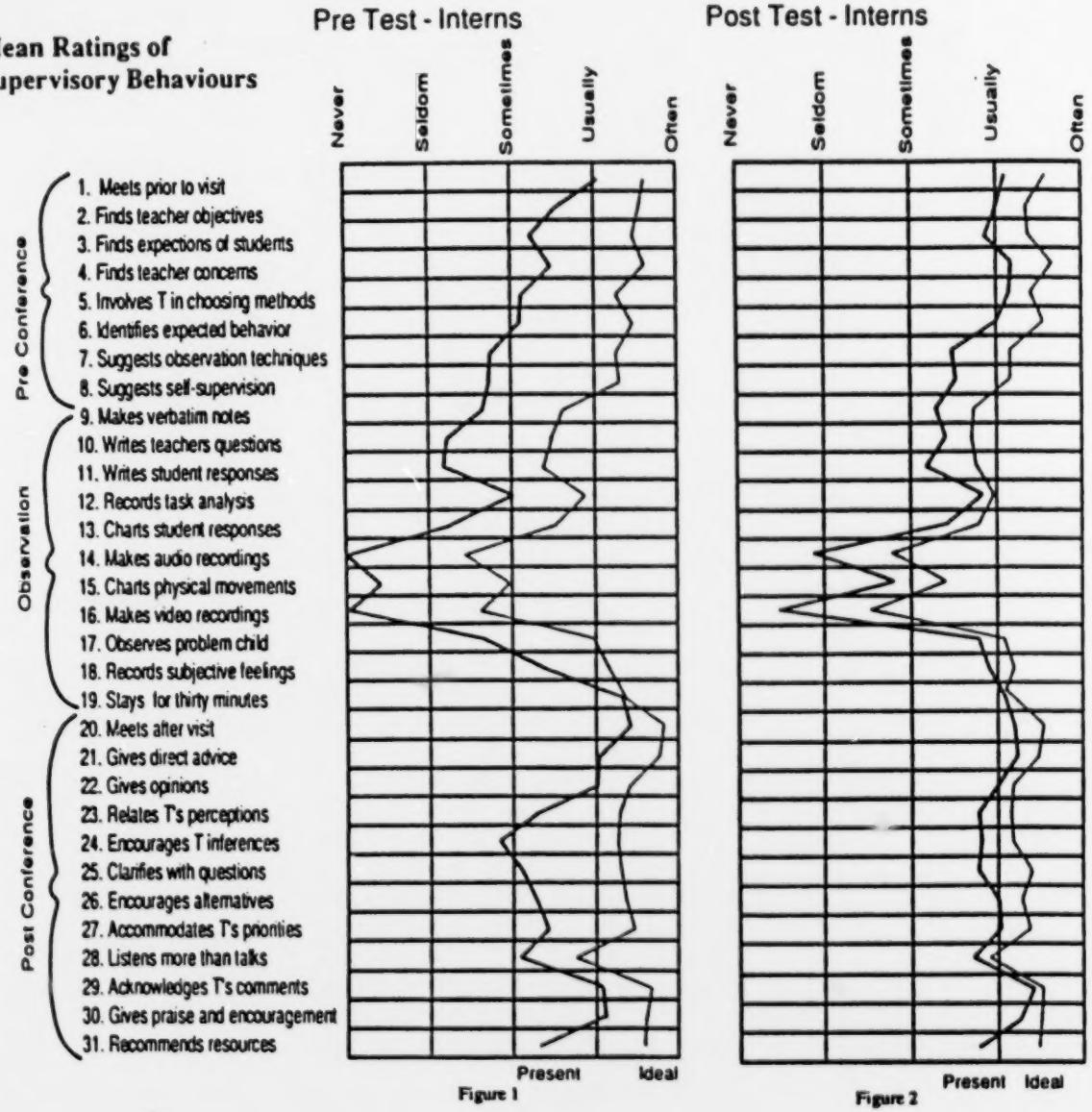

Figure 1

Figure 2

teaching". This infers that interns had as much subjective opinion from their cooperating teachers as they wanted.

Post-internship

Present. The most frequently used supervisory behavior perceived by interns at the post internship stage was "acknowledges my comments". This suggests a prevalent non-directive supervisory style recommended by Glickman (1985) and Schon (1987) where interns are empowered to reflect on their own practice. Interns were also usually receiving "praise and encouragement" and had cooperating teachers who "found out intern's concerns". These supervisory behaviors build teacher esteem.

Ideal. The highest rated ideal items also reflected the consideration behaviors wanted from the supervisors. The top supervisory behaviors were "find out my concerns" and "acknowledges my comments". "My" was the dominant word suggesting post-internship interns focused on concerns for self. They remain at Fuller's (1969) first level of professional maturity.

Satisfaction. Greatest satisfaction came to interns when supervisors "stayed at least 30 minutes" and recorded students "at task behaviors". This second behavior was a source of relief to interns who, like Levy's (1987) first year teachers, frequently had fears of classroom management problems such as "off task" student behavior.

The least satisfying supervisory behavior after "audio and video recording" was when cooperating teachers did not "suggest a variety of observation methods". This may imply that interns are most anxious to know about all aspects of their teaching and that cooperating teachers need further observation techniques training. There is, for example, no provision for qualitative observations in the Internship model represented in the present study.

Pre/post Relationship

Overall satisfaction with "present" supervisory behaviors increased and moved closer to the "ideal" when interns and cooperating teachers experienced mutual training and had frequent practice in clinical supervision over the internship (compare Figure 1 with Figure 2). The increased satisfaction supports Blumberg's (1980) observation that multiple observation visits are needed to effect real change in teacher behavior, and Townsend's (1984) contention that respondents, trained and experienced in supervision, had a high level of satisfaction with supervision.

Interns in this sample, in agreement with Krajewski (1982), Reavis (1977) and Acheson & Gall (1987), are apparently verifying the need for supervisors to build on foundations of trust, respect, and cooperation with their supervisees.

CONCLUSIONS

Perceptions of intern satisfaction with supervision can be measured by replicating results from related studies and by comparing present and ideal perceptions of supervisor behaviors before and after internship. Training and experience in clinical supervision were also related significantly to satisfaction. The results suggest the following:

1. College supervisors should provide school-based training in audio and video recording and charting physical movement. College supervisors and cooperating teachers need to identify both interns' technical problems and interns' personal problems related to audio and video taping. Many interns need a series of graduated experiences that allow them to gain self-confidence in performing in front of the camera or microphone. Interns also need control of the audio or videotapes so that their fears of the use of recordings as incriminating permanent evidence will be allayed. Other personal problems related to interns' concerns of use of media

should be identified and solved by the supervision team. Interns also need training, experience, and coaching with the particular equipment that exists at a placement site. When interns have mastery over the use of the equipment, they will also master their own technophobia. Then further study of these behaviors should be initiated to determine if they are or are not suitable school-site observation techniques.

2. A wider variety of other observation methods should also be taught to meet the diverse needs of interns. Observation methods may include "seating chart records" of student and/or teacher movement. Students' "off task" behavior and teachers' "equitable distribution of questions" can be easily recorded on seating charts. "Selective verbatim "samples of classroom talk such as students' responses or teachers' questions and directions is another observation method. "Cause and effect" charts recording student action and teacher reaction is another method that provides observational data on classroom management or other interaction patterns.

3. Mutual training for interns and cooperating teachers in clinical supervision and time to implement this supervision model results in increased satisfaction with supervision.

4. Supervision does continue to elicit mixed reactions. While its ideal purpose of helping teachers improve instruction is applauded, its actual practice is frequently frustrated. The potential is often not realized.

5. Conditions of this supervisory practice that made it satisfying to interns are training and experience. Specific training factors include mutual teacher effectiveness and supervision training for interns and cooperating teachers; on-going coaching and consistent modelling of clinical supervision by the cooperating teachers and the college supervisors; and a clear goal of mastering effective teaching behaviors that give interns a reason to practice supervision. The supervisory

behaviors listed on Figure 1 and 2 are designed to make the intern have power over the process.

6. In the preconference, the cooperating teacher does not just barge into the interns lesson and begin to take observation notes. Instead, the cooperating teachers insures the intern's comfort by creating a mutually understood contract specifying "what" the cooperating teacher will do and "how" he/she will do it. The emphasis is on determining what teacher and students will do in the lesson and how the cooperating teacher can collect observation data about a teaching target chosen by the intern. The data collected is restricted to the intern's teaching targets unless the intern also invites the cooperating teacher to collect data on emerging action that cannot be foreseen in the preconference.

7. During the observation phase, the cooperating teacher arrives at the mutually agreed upon time. Data is collected on instruments, frequently designed by the interns.

8. In the post conference, the intern is presented the data display as soon after the lesson as possible. The intern is encouraged to draw his or her own inferences about the lesson. The cooperating teacher acts as encourager, clarifier, and alternative provider, as the intern concludes about the data.

9. In the early stages of the internship, the cooperating teacher also provides direct advice and opinions if requested by the the intern. Creating and maintaining the intern's positive self-esteem is crucial throughout the internship.

10. When the clinical supervision process is followed, a trusting relationship can be developed which leads to professional growth for intern and cooperating teacher. This trust-based relationship fosters a positive teaching climate. Mutual risk-taking is encouraged and accepted, and students benefit.

11. Finally, extensive teaching experience with feedback should be provided during the internship which allows interns and cooperating teachers time to develop

supportive collegial relationships as well as time for interns to see the results of supervisory practice in their own instructional improvement.

Utilization of these recommendations will bring improved supervisory behaviors, increased intern satisfaction with supervision, and ultimately improved instruction for students.

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